

APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

MICROPHONES WITH EQUAL SENSITIVITY

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates to a method for the production of microphones with equal sensitivity, in which each microphone has a microphone capsule and an amplifier. The invention further relates to the microphone itself.

2. Description of the Related Art

[0002] Microphones exist in the prior art consisting of a microphone capsule and a microphone amplifier connected, if possible, directly to it, hereafter generally called "amplifier". The microphone capsule serves to convert soundwaves into electrical voltage. The microphone amplifier serves to amplify the voltage coming from the microphone capsule. The electrical and structural connection of the microphone capsule and microphone amplifier is generally called a microphone for short.

[0003] The two large variables for the sensitivity of a microphone lie in the microphone capsules and the microphone amplifier. The sensitivity tolerance of the microphone capsule and the amplification tolerance of the amplifier are decisive for the fluctuations of sensitivity from microphone to microphone. Ordinarily, tolerances of about ± 4 dB from the stipulated sensitivity value are assumed, and also are accepted as the standard tolerance of microphone sensitivity, for example, in the automotive industry for hands-free microphones. If a smaller deviation is required in series production, this directly leads to a very high expense, which again leads to a significant increase in manufacturing costs. The achievement of narrower tolerances of microphone sensitivity can be accomplished, for example, with time- and resource-intensive selection of the finished microphones. The sensitivity of each microphone is then measured and classified, according to the result, into stipulated sensitivity classes. This leads to significant organizational and metrological expense and thus makes production more expensive, not to mention the fact that microphones that lie outside of the stipulated sensitivity range

must be scrapped, since a correction is not possible or is not possible at an acceptable cost.

[0004] The enormously expanding use of microphones in vehicles and the increasing requirements on the quality of microphones have posed difficult tasks to microphone manufacturers. In recent years, so-called array microphones have been developed. Such microphones have a much better directional effect than the thus far known individual microphones. They consist of several individual microphones, which are electronically controlled, in order to achieve a better directional effect. To configure such complicated electronic systems error-free, it is necessary to use individual microphones with the most uniform possible sensitivity. Today, the individual microphones employed are preselected at very high expense to achieve these narrow tolerances, then combined with the same amplifiers, which can be produced without problems with narrow tolerances, since the tolerance ranges of the individual microphones to be used jointly for the aforementioned reasons are much narrower than they otherwise ordinarily must be, namely, in the range of ± 1.5 dB. With a further reduction in

the deviation of individual microphones from each other, the logistic expense increases exponentially, which leads to a prohibitive cost explosion and has thus far prevented any industrial implementation of the production of microphones with identical sensitivity.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to construct such microphones in a simple and cost-effective manner, in order to achieve economically acceptable results even with very narrow stipulated tolerances in the sensitivities of the microphones.

[0006] In order to be able to maintain such strict limits simply and cheaply, the invention proposes that the microphone amplifiers are designed to be adjustable and, during the production of the microphone, the amplifier is adjusted to a value through which the stipulated sensitivity of the microphone is obtained in combination with the capsule sensitivity.

[0007] Modern microphone amplifiers are offered as integrated circuits by several manufacturers as standardized electronic components. Some of these amplifiers are designed so that their amplification can be adjusted with an externally applied DC voltage applied in a stipulated range. This adjustment can be conducted either with a resistance network or

with a potentiometer. Such amplifiers are used wherever a precisely adjustable and/or easily changeable amplification is desired. These are mostly electronic devices with a large electronic integration factor, such as televisions and hi-fi equipment.

[0008] It is possible without great expense to accommodate such an amplifier in the housing of a microphone, since its weight and dimensions are much smaller than the usual discretely constructed amplifiers. In principle, the microphone capsule is then soldered to a printed circuit that also has, in addition to electronic components that are necessary for amplifier function, an electronic network of passive components, for example, a resistance network. The resistance network is connected to the electrical control circuit of the amplifier and any change in resistance value influences amplification of the amplifier and therefore the sensitivity of the microphone. The microphone is assembled so that influencing of the resistance network is possible by means of a laser through the openings in the microphone housing.

[0009] The passive components can also be capacitive or inductive elements, capacitors or coils, but ohmic resistance devices are preferred for cost reasons, and for better understanding only such resistance devices will subsequently be discussed.

[0010] Tuning of the microphone is conducted at the measurement location in a controlled measurement loop. The sensitivity of the microphone is measured, then the superfluous passive components, mostly resistors, or the electrical conductors to the corresponding passive components, are burned away by laser from the outside. The amplification of the amplifier and therefore the sensitivity of the microphone are brought to the desired value in this way.

[0011] It is possible to cost-effectively and with the simplest logistics, even in large series, achieve a sensitivity that is the same in all microphones even within the narrowest limits, without the usual broad tolerances. Only minimal fluctuations remain, which are due to the accuracy of the

regulated control voltage of the integrated amplifier, primarily from the number of resistors available for regulation.

[0012] The various features of novelty, which characterize the invention, are pointed out with particularity in the claims annexed to and forming part of the disclosure. For a better understanding of the invention, its operating advantages, and specific objects attained by its use, reference should be had to the drawing and descriptive matter in which there are illustrated and described preferred embodiments of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

[0013] In the drawing:

[0014] Figure 1 shows the design of a microphone according to the prior art;

[0015] Figure 2 shows the design of an array microphone according to the prior art;

[0016] Figure 3 shows the design of a microphone according to the invention; and

[0017] Figure 4 shows an example of a passive network according to the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0018] The pure principle structure of a microphone 1, consisting of a microphone capsule 2 and an amplifier 3, is shown Figure 1. Figure 2 shows the arrangement of several such microphones $1'$, $1''$, ..., ..., 1^n , etc. in an array microphone 4 with a common electronic control unit 5.

[0019] Figure 3 purely schematically shows an individual microphone 1 designed according to the invention. The microphone has, as is customary, a microphone capsule 2 and an amplifier 3. A resistance network 6 is allocated to the amplifier 3, whose total resistance is variable. By changing this total resistance, it is possible to influence the amplification of the amplifier 3 and therefore the sensitivity of the individual microphone 1 in the desired manner.

[0020] An example of the possible design of a resistance network 6 according to the invention is shown in Figure 4. In this embodiment, several resistors R_i are connected parallel to each other and, depending on the measurement result, resistors (or the lines to the resistors) are destroyed by exposure to a

laser beam, so that the total resistance of the network changes to the value through which the individual microphone comes into the desired sensitivity range. In order to proceed with the smallest number of resistors R_i with the best possible adjustment of total resistance, there are different strategies that depend on the scatter of the capsule sensitivities to be expected. Thus, it is possible to choose the resistors according to a geometric series:

$$[0021] \quad R_1 : R_2 : R_3 : R_4 = 1 : 2 : 3 : 4.$$

[0022] It is also possible to choose the resistors that are as equally large with respect to each other as possible:

$$[0023] \quad R_1 = R_2 = R_3 = R_4.$$

[0024] Naturally, it is not necessary to maintain these strategies or to arrange the resistors exclusively parallel to each other. They can also form a regular network that a person skilled in the art can easily lay out based upon the teachings in the present application.

[0025] A not unessential detail for practical use concerns the arrangement of the resistance network and the design of the housing of the individual microphone. In order to facilitate handling and to do so cost-effectively, an opening is provided in the housing through which the laser beam can be targeted on the resistance network. Whether this opening is then closed or remains open depends on the corresponding incorporation situation. It is easy for one skilled in the art with knowledge of the invention to devise a reliable but cost-effective closure, if necessary.

[0026] In another embodiment, the resistance network 6 is arranged directly on the circuit board of the amplifier 3, in order to save contacts and lines. Figure 3, which shows the resistance network, is also a purely schematic depiction in this respect.

[0027] The relation between deactivated resistors and the change in sensitivity of the microphone is known to one skilled in the art in the field of electroacoustics, and can be easily determined by such a person with knowledge of the invention with reference to the microphone capsules and amplifiers available.

With knowledge of this relation, the resistances which must be disconnected are determined on a case by case basis, in order to impart the desired sensitivity to the microphone.

[0028] The invention is not limited by the embodiments described above which are presented as examples only but can be modified in various ways within the scope of the protection defined by the appended patent claims.